

National Memorial Holocaust Site
Balf, Hungary
June 17, 2008

“Jó napot kívánok. Nagyon örülök hogy itt lehetek.” (*Good afternoon. I am very glad to be here.*)

“It is an honor for me to be here at the National Memorial Site at Balf. The site recognizes the forced laborers who died in local labor camps. Many who died were prominent Jews – historians and well-known literary figures.

I just viewed the foundation stone and toured the Document Center. I hope this new memorial will stimulate reflection and reconciliation. It is a stark reminder of the victims of history’s darkest hours. It powerfully underscores the message “Never Again.”

That message must never be forgotten. And the facts of history must never be rewritten. Their importance must never be diminished.

On May 1, International Holocaust Memorial Day, I traveled to Auschwitz in Poland with Hungarian Minister of Defense Imre Szekeres. I participated in the “March of the Living.” I commemorated those awful times when so many innocent people were senselessly exterminated.

This was my first visit to Auschwitz. Friends told me to brace myself, and I did. But still, I was not prepared for the impact that it had on me. I saw the empty containers of chemicals used in experiments to make murder more efficient. I saw what is left of the abusive living quarters where people were piled together to await extermination. I saw rooms full of human hair. I heard the screaming silence of death.

As the remaining Holocaust survivors pass on, the responsibility of educating future generations cannot be lost. We must commemorate anniversaries of the most horrendous events in human history. We must do everything possible to prevent such deeds from occurring ever again.

We must remain vigilant on this issue, not just one day, but month after month and year after year over time.

Knowledge about the extermination of entire populations in Europe by the Nazis during World War II must be kept alive.

The project here in Balf is critical to our eternal vigilance. Gathering information from eyewitnesses and sharing their experiences preserves the memory of the Holocaust and helps us all remember “Never Again.”

I wish you great success on the project, and I look forward to seeing the completed efforts.”

“Köszönöm megtisztelő figyelmüket.” (*Thank you for your kind attention*)